



Highlights ...

- OSEP Data Verification Visit report forthcoming and other federal deadlines approach. See article on Page 1.
- TOTS Tips on Page 2.



Kentucky Department for
Public Health
Division of Maternal and Child Health
275 East Main Street
HS2W-C
Frankfort, KY 40621-0001

877.41STEPS

fs.chfs.ky.gov

March 6, 2009

TIME IS FLYING ...

Though hard to believe, we are almost 3/4 of the way through FY09. At this time last year we had not yet begun designing TOTS and here we are—1 year later, fully operational. ... Amazing!

We are somewhat anxiously awaiting the report of findings from the federal Data Verification visit that took place the first week of December, 2008. We were told it would be issued within 80 days—which would have been last week; so we're expecting it any time now.

Given the information we received at the Exit Conference, we know that we can expect findings related to General Supervision, Timely Services, Transition and compliance with Payor of Last Resort requirements. It is our hope that findings beyond these four will be limited.

Other things Central Office is working on: The FFY 2009 Federal Grant Application. The application is due to the U.S. Department of Education on May 18, 2009, but must be posted for public review for 60 days prior to submission and must be subject to a 30 day public comment period. At this time, Central Office intends

to post the application on the First Steps website (fs.chfs.ky.gov) on March 17, 2009. Public comments will be accepted in writing by mail from March 17, 2009 through April 17, 2009 and the Application will remain posted for review until May 18, 2009—at which time it will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

Central Office is also awaiting notification of OSEP's preliminary review of the FFY 2007 APR. Last year was the first year that OSEP allowed States a period of time to review preliminary questions and/or concerns about the APR and an opportunity to make corrections, if needed. OSEP has indicated that States will receive notification during the first or second week of April and, as last year, will have one (1) week to make any necessary adjustments to the APR before final determinations are made closer to June.

Lots to do, lots to do ... before we know it, we'll have worked away Spring.



TOTS TIPS

Nan Slaughter has categorized the following as one of the most important TOTS tips ever (you be the judge) :

The morning after a TOTS billing cycle cut-off date, print your Agency Invoice Report and have it waiting to match to your next check. When your check comes, verify that the amount is correct and attach the stub to the report and file it. This is the absolute easiest way to be sure you know what you've received payment for.

In addition, Nan offers a close second:

To find a child who was on your caseload, but who dis-

peared because he/she has aged out, left the program or had their plan expire, you must use the Child Search feature. Enter either the child's name or TOTS ID# and search. (By the way, ID #'s are the best — enter each child's ID# on their paper file so you'll have it for this purpose.) If the child does not show up at the bottom of the screen, he/she may have actually been officially discharged. If that is the case, you may have to click "inactive" and search again. Once you locate the record, click "detail" to take you there. Once there, you may enter service logs, communication logs, billing, etc. as needed.

REVISED PRACTICE GUIDES FOR PARENTS FROM THE CENTER FOR EARLY LITERACY LEARNING

Source: Center for Early Literacy Learning—February 24, 2009

The Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) has revised its practice guides for parents, which are available at <http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/pgparents.php>. The guides are now written at a 6th—8th grade reading level and are meant to be used by

Practitioners to help parents promote the early and emergent literacy skills of young children with disabilities or delays. They are organized by child age and the type of literacy skill. Each CELL practice guide includes a feedback form for Web site visitors to complete, in order to help CELL make further improvements to the guides.

Upcoming Events

Online modules available on TRAIN:

First Steps KEDS Module—Course ID 1011230

First Steps MRSA/Staph Prevention Module—Course ID 1010495

First Steps NONCREDIT Informational Module—Course ID 1009491

Register for all First Steps trainings on TRAIN at www.train.org

Visit the First Steps website at
fs.chfs.ky.gov





Highlights ...

- Nan's TOTS Tips start on Page 1.

Quick Notes:

- Provider payments were processed and checks issued today.



Kentucky Department for
Public Health
Division of Maternal and Child Health
275 East Main Street
HS2W-C
Frankfort, KY 40621-0001

877.41STEPS

fs.chfs.ky.gov

March 13, 2009

NAN'S TOTS TIPS

For All Providers: One Child at a Time

We have recently found a couple of isolated cases where data from one child (such as an evaluation or assessment) showed up on another child's record.

It is possible, of course, for a provider to enter information on the wrong child's record. This is not what happened in these isolated cases, however.

Rather we have found that while a provider was working in one child record, they opened another Internet Explorer window and began working in another child's record. As they were doing this, data "migrated" from one record to the other.

So, we're asking TOTS users to abide by the One Child at a Time rule. When working in TOTS, work with one record at a time in one Internet Explorer window. This will serve to prevent data losses or "migrations".

To PSCs: TOTS Data Check Request

Now that all children in First Steps have TOTS records, we need to review all records for complete and accurate data. Some of you have

been contacted through your local POE to enter missing information, and may feel that we are "nit-picking". Although some of us are professional nit-pickers, we want you to know that's not the case here--these pieces of data affect our ability to bill Medicaid, Family Share, or send data to school districts. Please assist us (and save yourself a future email) by doing the following:

- 1) Check the Demographic Screen for a complete address, including zip code, and a complete and accurate Social Security Number.
- 2) Check the Parent Screen for a complete address, including zip code in Parent 1 space. Note: If you check "same address as child", you won't have to re-type it.
- 3) Check the Financial Screen for a complete and accurate Medicaid number if applicable. Income information must be included if a family pays Family Share.
- 4) Click through your active caseload and check the (Continued on Page 2)

NAN'S TOTS TIPS (CONT'D)

current IFSP screen to be sure that all information listed there belongs to that child. If you see evaluation information that does not belong, please contact nan.slaughter@ky.gov immediately!

- 5) And finally, please make it a practice to carefully

check the printed IFSP form before you provide it to the family. If there is an error, you may see it there more readily than you do on the screen. Never print one off and send it without reading it first!

Your attention to these details is very important, and greatly appreciated!

Upcoming Events

Online modules available on TRAIN:

First Steps KEDS Module—Course ID 1011230

First Steps MRSA/Staph Prevention Module—Course ID 1010495

First Steps NONCREDIT Informational Module—Course ID 1009491

Register for all First Steps trainings on TRAIN at www.train.org

EARLY EXPERIENCES MATTER: A GUIDE TO IMPROVED POLICIES FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Source: ZERO TO THREE—
March 9, 2009

ZERO TO THREE has released a new comprehensive set of tools for early childhood policymakers and advocates entitled *Early Experiences Matter: A Guide to Improved Policies for Infants and Toddlers*. The guide brings together evidence from science, research and practice. It includes the following:

- Eleven concise issue briefs which support ZERO TO THREE's policy agenda of Good Health, Strong Families, Positive Early Learning Experiences, and Systems Building.
- Infant-toddler data to in-

form the policy-making process.

- A compilation of the evidence for investing in the infant-toddler policy agenda.
- A strategic look at ways to get started, with sample policy options and state examples.
- In-depth issue papers and policymaking tools

The Early Experiences Matter Policy Guide was developed with the support of the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation and the Carol Berman Fund.

It is available online at <http://www.zerotothree.org/policyguide>.

Visit the First Steps website at

fs.chfs.ky.gov





Highlights ...

- Technical Assistance Team Restructure beginning on Page 1.
- Important notice regarding IFSP dates beginning on Page 1.



Kentucky Department for
Public Health
Division of Maternal and Child Health
275 East Main Street
HS2W-C
Frankfort, KY 40621-0001

877.41STEPS

fs.chfs.ky.gov

March 20, 2009

REFOCUSING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND MONITOR-

The Technical Assistance Teams (TATs) have played a vital role in supporting the ongoing development and improvement of the First Steps program. Program Consultants have provided valuable assistance with training, policy and regulation clarification and local systems planning; Program Evaluators have assisted in assuring program compliance and resolving disputes locally and informally; and Parent Consultants have provided a broad base of support and assistance to parents throughout the Commonwealth.

We now find ourselves in a place that presents us with both significant challenges and unforeseen opportunities.

As I have shared with you, these are very challenging

financial times. As folks on "Main Street" tighten their belts, we too in State government tighten ours. The First Steps program in particular is analyzing all spending and working to maximize program efficiencies to the greatest extent possible.

In addition, we are living in an era of heightened accountability and must be able to assure adequate supervision and oversight of the Part C Early Intervention Program (First Steps) - which is funded in large part by taxpayer dollars.

Finally, technology has provided us with mechanisms to streamline administrative processes. Webcasting, videoconference, online training and TOTS all afford the program the opportunity to reduce administrative structures (and expense).

(Continued on Page 2)

IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING IFSP DATES

The First Steps program has operated under a longstanding protocol of postdating IFSPs—meaning that PSCs hold a meeting on one day (typically 30 days before the

6 month plan expires), but start the plan developed on that day at a later time.

This practice began to

(Continued on Page 4)



With all of these stars aligning at once, Central Office is using this opportunity to restructure the Technical Assistance Teams.

Restructuring the TATs was not a decision that was easily arrived at. The TATs are not simply numbers or structures. They are made up of real people—all of whom have longstanding professional ties and most of whom have personal ties to the First Steps program. Further, in these economic times, the decision to eliminate any positions is agonizing.

This said, the First Steps program cannot afford to continue under the current TAT structure and must now utilize the opportunities available to maximize program efficiencies.

Effective July 1, 2009 (Fiscal Year 2010), Central Office will:

- (1) reduce the overall number of Technical Assistance Teams from seven (7) to five (5).

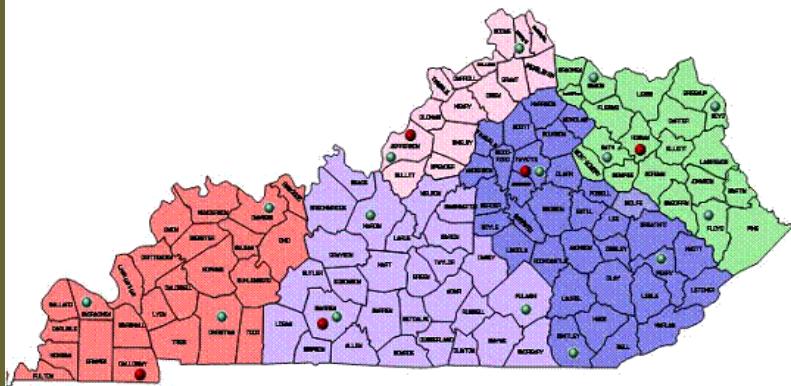
The Eastern Kentucky University TAT and the Northern Kentucky TAT will be eliminated;

- (2) Centralize monitoring activities and eliminate regional Program Evaluator positions; and
- (3) Reduce the overall number of Parent Consultants on the remaining five (5) teams from five (5) to three (3) and adjust their role from providing regional support to providing statewide support—making their variety of skills and experiences available to parents across the State.

The map below illustrates the realigned TA regions. This map will be posted to the First Steps website homepage on Monday, where it can be viewed in a larger format.

This reorganization will realign some Districts to new TA support persons. District and County assignments will be as follows:

(Continued on Page 3)





Morehead State University

Districts to be served:

- (1) Big Sandy
- (2) FIVCO
- (3) Gateway
- (4) Buffalo Trace

Inclusive of the following counties:

Bath, Boyd, Bracken, Carter, Elliott, Fleming, Floyd, Greenup, Johnson, Lawrence, Lewis, Magoffin, Martin, Mason, Menifee, Montgomery, Morgan, Pike and Robertson, Rowan

Murray State University

Districts to be served:

- (1) Green River
- (2) Purchase
- (3) Pennyrile

Inclusive of the following counties:

Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Daviess, Fulton, Graves, Hancock, Henderson, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, McLean, Muhlenberg, Ohio, Todd, Trigg, Union and Webster

University of Kentucky

Districts to be served:

- (1) Bluegrass
- (2) Kentucky River
- (3) Cumberland Valley

Inclusive of the following counties:

Anderson, Bell, Bourbon, Boyle, Breathitt, Clark, Clay, Estill, Fayette, Franklin, Garrard, Harlan, Harrison, Jackson, Jessamine, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Lincoln, Madison,

Mercer, Nicholas, Owsley, Perry, Powell, Rockcastle, Scott, Whitley, Wolfe and Woodford

University of Louisville

Districts to be served:

- (1) Kentuckiana (KIPDA)
- (2) Northern Kentucky

Inclusive of the following counties:

Boone, Bullitt, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Henry, Jefferson, Kenton, Oldham, Owen, Pendleton, Shelby, Spencer and Trimble

Western Kentucky University

Districts to be served:

- (1) Barren River
- (2) Lake Cumberland
- (3) Lincoln Trail

Inclusive of the following counties:

Adair, Allen, Barren, Breckinridge, Butler, Casey, Clinton, Cumberland, Edmonson, Grayson, Green, Hardin, Hart, Larue, Logan, Marion, McCreary, Meade, Metcalfe, Monroe, Nelson, Pulaski, Russell, Simpson, Taylor, Warren, Wayne and Washington

While we understand this transition will involve change and adjustment, we are confident in the capabilities of the TA support staff and their capacity to provide responsive support and assistance.



accommodate the billing system, which required clean data/billing periods. IFSPs were required to run for exactly 6 month periods of time and gaps between plans could not exist.

There are two problems this practice presents. First, and most importantly, OSEP has informed us—and we agree—that the IFSP takes effect on the day the parent/guardian provides consent for implementation (i.e. the meeting date). It is not appropriate and is no longer acceptable to postdate an IFSP meeting date.

Second, this practice causes problems in TOTS when PSCs conduct Requested Reviews and 6 Month or Annual Review meetings on the same date. Sound illogical? It should. It's done because of the long-standing protocol of postdating IFSPs.

So, effective immediately, Service Coordinators, please discontinue the practice of postdating IFSPs by holding meetings in advance of the plan start date.

Service Coordinators should prepare appropriately for the 6 Month Review and Annual IFSP meetings. This preparation will begin well in advance of the actual meeting date. However, the meeting itself should take place as close to the time at which the current IFSP is set to expire as possible.

It is unreasonable to expect

that Service Coordinators will be able to schedule meetings in such a way as to neatly align IFSP periods back to back. It is acceptable for Service Coordinators to hold the 6 Month Review or Annual IFSP meeting one or even possibly two weeks before the current plan is set to expire. In this case, the IFSP Meeting Date in TOTS must reflect the date on which the meeting actually takes place. The new plan (and its corresponding Planned Services) will take effect on the meeting date—which is the date on which the parent/guardian signs consent to implement the plan. The end date for each plan should be six months from the start date.

If Service Coordinators are unable to schedule the 6 Month Review or Annual IFSP meeting prior to the expiration of the current plan, the Service Coordinator should follow the steps to request and process an IFSP extension to avoid a potential interruption in services and supports.

NOTE: This is effective immediately, but is not retroactive. Plans that have already been finalized should not be changed. Just proceed under these guidelines moving forward. Also note that Requested Reviews are not affected by this change. Requested Reviews will continue to retain the end date of the current plan.

Please contact your POE or your Program Consultant with questions you may have.

Online modules available on TRAIN:

First Steps KEDS Module—Course ID 1011230

First Steps MRSA/Staph Prevention Module—Course ID 1010495

First Steps NONCREDIT Informational Module—Course ID 1009491

Register for all First Steps trainings on TRAIN at www.train.org

Visit the First Steps website at

fs.chfs.ky.gov





Highlights ...

- TOTS Tips start on page 1.
- Family Share reminder on page 2.



Kentucky Department for
Public Health
Division of Maternal and Child Health
275 East Main Street
HS2W-C
Frankfort, KY 40621-0001

877.41STEPS

fs.chfs.ky.gov

March 27, 2009

NAN'S TOTS TIPS

As many of you have discovered, there has been a change in the **Service Logged Awaiting Payment** feature of TOTS. We regret that this was an unannounced change for the field and we will do a better job in the future of alerting you to upcoming changes.

This enhancement in TOTS was necessary due to a lag-time in large agency and Point of Entry homepage functions. Moving this feature from the Homepage allows the Homepage to load much faster.

Here is some information regarding this enhancement:

- Rather than finding a drop down box on your Homepage, you will click on the new link on your Homepage, which will take you to the **Services Logged Awaiting Payment**.

- To find all the services logged awaiting payment for your agency, you simply click the SEARCH button.
- By choosing the provider's name in the search feature, agencies can sort the list of service logs by provider. You do not need to search by individual child record.
- Once you complete the Account Payable screen for a particular child, you can return to the list by using the "Back" button on your web browser.
- You will still have to go through all IFSPs and all services authorized to make sure you have processed all pending service logs.

We hope you will find this
(Continued on Page 2)

NEW REPORT FINDS ONE IN EVERY 50 CHILDREN IN AMERICA ARE HOMELESS EACH YEAR

Source: National Center on Family Homelessness—Retrieved March 27, 2009
The National Center on Family Homelessness has released a new report entitled *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness*. The report documents the

extent of child homelessness, provides comprehensive state-by-state data on the status of homeless children, describes the plight of these children and offers recommended solutions. It is available online at <http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/>

NAN'S TOTS TIPS (CONT'D)

Change to be a benefit for you and your agency in the future.

Service Coordinators: When entering a request on the Record Review Screen, please use only the first 4 fields (*Record Review Type, *Date Initiated, *Reason for Request (<500 characters), and *Request Detail). Some folks are running out of space and using the Record Review Summary and Recommendations sections. Then the Record Review staff person has to

edit, change and/or delete information before entering their determination.

Also, if you'd like the Record Review Team to contact you when their decision is posted on TOTS, please include that request on your faxed documentation and include your contact information. If this is not included, they will just enter the information on TOTS and you will have to go on to check for it.



JUST A REMINDER

Service coordinators: when families who are participating in Family Share have updates in address and/or income, it is important to update Lisa Dorman. You can fax her in Central Office at 502/564-8003.

Central Office is working to align the Lisa's Family Share management system with TOTS and when that is complete, ongoing updates will not be necessary. However, in the meantime, she still needs to be notified of these updates.

TAX TIME IS HERE ...

Tax time is here. This is just a brief reminder that 1099s do not come directly from Central Office. Rather, they come from the Kentucky Department

of Revenue. If you have questions or concerns regarding your 1099, please contact Revenue directly at 502-564-7750.

Online modules available on TRAIN:

First Steps KEDS Module—Course ID 1011230

First Steps MRSA/Staph Prevention Module—Course ID 1010495

First Steps NONCREDIT Informational Module—Course ID 1009491

Visit the First Steps website at fs.chfs.ky.gov

